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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002156

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2017

TAGS: PGOV PINR PTER I2

SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: SUNNI SAMARRA SECURITY CZAR REPLACED  
WITH SHIA NATIONAL POLICE COMMANDER

Classified By: PRT Leader Steven R. Buckler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

¶2. (C) In the wake of the June 13 bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque (AKA Ali al Hadi Shrine, al Askariya Shrine), Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki fired Samarra security czar General Adnan Thabit, a Sunni native of the Sunni city of Samarra, at a June 25 meeting in Baghdad. Thabit had been tapped in late 2006 to lead all security initiatives in the city to allow for the reconstruction of the Golden Dome Mosque, which was first bombed in February 22, 2006 and touched off sustained sectarian violence throughout Iraq.

¶3. (C) In Thabit's place, the PM installed Major General (MG) Rashid Flayyih Muhammad al Halifi, National Police (NP) First Division Commander and a Shia from Baghdad (see bio notes in para 5). According to other reporting, General Rashid has known associations with Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) and was reportedly involved in the 1996 attempt to overthrow former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

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COMMENT  
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¶4. (C) The change from Thabit to Rashid is of considerable concern. Thabit, well liked and respected in Samarra, was the lynchpin for dispelling sectarian tensions and for integrating the NP and other security forces into the city. Samarra residents are deeply mistrustful of outsiders and believe the coming security elements, especially the NP, will be Shia-dominated and a vehicle for JAM to gain a foothold in the city. These perceptions along with the growing pressure related to the Golden Dome Mosque's reconstruction provide great potential for sectarian violence in Samarra. With an already strong al Qaeda (AQI)/Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) presence in the greater Samarra area (al Jalaam, Motessim, Al Rugga, Al Qala, Ishaki), it is possible that the city's residents will become more supportive of AQI/ISI in the face of sectarian violence. END COMMENT.

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Bio Notes: Rashid Flayyih Muhammad al Halifi  
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¶5. (C) General Rashid Flayyih Muhammad al Halifi, a Shia Muslim from the al Halifi tribe, is Commander of the First Division of the National Police. Previously, he has held commander positions in various units and companies. He holds a BA in National Security from the Military Academy, a BS in Media from the College of Culture, and an MA in Political Science. Born in 1957, he hails from Baghdad. He was reportedly involved in the 1996 attempt to overthrow former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and was instrumental in the organization of a commando unit to fight insurgents, post-2003. U.S. military officials assess General Rashid as fiercely loyal and tactically sound, but only moderately effective due to his lack of organization. According to numerous reports, General Rashid has associations with and

supports JAM.

**¶6. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:  
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Tikrit>**  
CROCKER